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Socio-Economic Status as Predictor of Deviant Behaviours among Nigeria Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The study investigated socio-economic status as predictor of deviant behaviours among Nigeria secondary school students. The subject were sixty five students with an age range of 10 – 19 years drawn from Senior secondary school (SSS) 1 – III in four secondary schools in Oyo State. The subjects were selected from those whose names had been found to occur many times in the school punishment books. A self-constructed bio/data questionnaire, a modified Obanya's (1976) socio-economic status rating scale, and a modified Nwana (1975) deviant behaviour rating scale was used for data collection. The data collected was analysed using the chi-square statistics to test the two hypotheses used in the study. The findings revealed that there is a significant difference between the level/rate of deviant behaviour among students from high, middle, and low socio-economics status.

Keywords: Socio- Economic, Status, Predictor, Deviant Behaviour, Secondary School, Students, Nigeria.

Background to the Problem

When sociologists speak of “order” they mean that events occur in more or less regular sequence or pattern, so that we can make an empirically verifiable statement about the relation of one event to another at given points in time under specified conditions. Essentially, sociology is concerned with the management of order and by implication the problem of disorder. This explains why from time immemorial, human beings have taken active interest in their societies. They have shown considerable interests in the structures and functions of society. Evidence of these interests and knowledge of society can be gleaned from people's oral history, proverbs, anecdotes, songs and so on (Inkeles, 1964; Rotimi, 2000). In an attempt to fully understand societies however, human beings have been viewed within groups and in different social settings. One could thus safely conclude that through the ages, human beings have been doing sociology directly or indirectly.

The foregoing explains that sociologists give a large share of attention to discovering how people and groups relate with each other and how and why there is order and disorder in the society. From the perspective of order and disorder therefore, sociology is also interested in a variety of behavior and relationships: formal, and informal, conformity and also deviant behavior of criminal or non-criminal types. That is why in any organization or society, norms are expected to guide the behaviour of its members. The social norm is a standard against which the behaviour of members of the group is evaluated and often is also a standard for evaluating one's own behaviour. (Babarinde & Oni, 2005). In the case of schools, the norms are characterized by the school rules and regulations with which students are expected to acquaint themselves. However more often than not, it has been observed that while a large percentage of students observe the norms, some others deviate. (Ezewu, 1983; Sofola, 1994). The foregoing explains that order exists in human society. The question now arises, how far do our schools maintain/ensure social order knowing the fact that the universe itself follows certain order such that the sequence of events is not in a state of conflicts or collision?

In our society as in our schools, we have rules that define various fundamental rights or freedom. The totality of such rules makes it possible for the society particularly the school to function as a social unit and for individual to achieve his/her goals. Norms, customs and rules of the school therefore express the goals, values and aspiration of the society to which the product of the school would later on graduate and participate or function in the society. If the rules or norms of the school are violated, social disorder will ensue and the social system may cease to function as an on-going unit, which may affect the larger society or other social institutions working towards maintaining order in the society (Babarinde & Oni 2004).

As a result of the relevance of social order to any social setting and the dimensions which incidences of deviant behaviour, which infringe on school rules and regulations have taken, the study of deviant behaviour in schools has assumed greater attention. For sometime now, especially in the last decade it has become a common feature in our secondary schools to see students engage in street fighting, (public disorder) sport hooliganism or carry out violent demonstrations and in the process engage in wanton destruction of property or acts of arson on flimsy excuses in most cases. It has become a common feature in Nigeria today for one to hear or read in the dailies and other medias about secondary students that engage in crimes such as drug abuse or addiction, sex offences, smuggling and even armed robbery e.g. pick pocketing, snatching of cell phones, cyber crime, raping and theft of all kind. These no doubt are heights of deviant behaviour.

The search for methods of alleviating deviant behaviour in schools will however depend on the identification of the factors, which causes and tend to perpetuate it. Consequently, the problem of deviance in schools is thus of interest to educational sociologists. From the point of view of sociology of education, socially based factors are presumed to be very important, and identified as causes of deviant behaviour in schools. These causes according to Haralambos, & Heald, (2002) are generally seen from four different perspectives namely: *the personality factor, the parental factor, the school's factor and the larger society*

factor. However, the socio-economic status of the child's parents is a very important aspect of the parental factor.

This background therefore revealed that since educational sociologists are concerned with finding solutions to social problems / social disorder in schools and in the society, the identification of the of socio-economic status as predictor of deviant behaviour among Nigeria secondary schools students is a necessary step in that direction.

Statement of the Problem

For sometime now, especially in the last decade it has become a common feature in our secondary schools to see students engage in street fighting, (public disorder) sport hooliganism or carry out violent demonstrations and in the process engage in wanton destruction of property or acts of arson on flimsy excuses in most cases. It has become a common feature in Nigeria today for one to hear or read in the dailies and other medias about secondary students that engage in crimes such as drug abuse or addiction, sex offences, smuggling and even armed robbery e.g. pick pocketing, snatching of cell phones, cyber crime, raping and theft of all kind. This study therefore is to examine socio-economic status as predictors of deviant behaviour. This it is believed will bring out the earliest causes of deviant behaviour since the family is the first unit of the society that the child interacts or socialises with, before he goes out to meet his peer group and the larger society, including the school in his socialization process.

Research Questions

This study provided answer to the following questions:

1. To what extent does children from the high; middle and low socio-economic status deviate in schools?
2. To what extent does age influence deviant behaviour among children in the secondary school system?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses below were tested during the study.

- 1 That there is no significant difference between the level/rate of deviant behaviour among children of high, middle and low socio-economic status.
2. That there is no significant difference between the level/rate of deviant behaviour among younger and older children in the secondary school system.

Review of Literature

The Role of Education

Shipman (1978) defined education as the organized part of the process through which each successive generation learns the accumulated knowledge of a society. This cultural transmission is necessary so that people can fit into the existing pattern of life and associate with others in a predictable, efficient and humane way.

The involvement of education in the process of converting children into useful responsible adults means that it is not concerned solely with knowledge as preparation for occupation. Inevitably, it has to ensure that each generation shares a common set of values, the same ideas of right and wrong. The objective is therefore to produce a disciplined and well-informed adult. Education therefore contributes in a way to the development of desirable habits, skills and attitudes that makes an individual a good citizen (Chauhan, 1985). Buttressed further, Chauhan added that in the process of education, we try to shape the behaviors of young children according to the aims and goals of national life. Peters (1981) equally sees education as implying, "the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it." The indigenous Yoruba education equally typifies its standard measure the concept of *Omoluwabi*, which to Majasan (1967) "designated those Yoruba whose good character was the traditional model for the community." Preparation and the regulation of social life therefore determine to a reasonable extent the content of education, especially school education. Schools as agencies of socialization in society operate alongside other institutions like the family, religion, the social services and the society.

Since schools are frequently trying to transmit values, which are completely shared by the other influences on their pupils, they work against, as well as with other agencies of socialization in the society. In order to exclude adverse influences opposed to the paramount values it supports, the school authority tries to organize the school as a model of what life should be moral, disciplined, hardworking and friendly. This it does by instituting the school norms. Ezewu (1983) defined norms as: "the rules or standards of behaviour defined by the shared expectations of a group of people". These include what the group regards as a socially acceptable pattern of behaviour expected of every individual in the group. He went further to state that the human group, for example, the school, faced the problem of how to deal with those who do not conform to the standard of behaviour expected of all members, teachers and pupils alike. In the case of school, the standard way of behaviour is contained in the school's rules and regulations. The non-conformity with the norms of a group is what sociologists call deviant behaviour.

The concept of Deviant Behaviour

The definition or understanding of deviance rests on the fact that in human societies there are rules governing the behavior and conduct of individuals. These rules according to Sofola (1994) form what in specific terms are regarded as social norms. Becker (1963) buttresses on this that; whether an act is deviant is not a property inherent in any particular kind of behavior; it is a property conferred upon that behavior by the people who come into contact with it (Eitzen & Zinn, 2004). In the explanation of these writers there is abundant anthropological evidence that what is right or wrong varies from society to society.

Definitions of deviance as we could see from the ongoing explanation vary widely as we range over the various classes found in single society or across the various cultures into which mankind is divided, and it soon becomes apparent that there are no objective properties

which all deviants acts can be said to share in common even within the confines of a given group. Behavior which qualifies one man for prison may qualify another for sainthood, since the quality of the act itself depends on the circumstances under which it was performed and the temper of the audience which witnessed it. So, the basic explanation is that any behavior identified or agreed by society, as deviant behavior is a threat to the social order because it makes social life difficult and unpredictable. It causes confusion about the norms and values of a society because people are likely to become confused about what is expected, what is wrong or what is right. In essence, deviance breaks social norms and values and with the functionalists emphasis on the importance of shared norms and values as the basis for social order, it would appear according to Haralabos & Heald (2002) that deviance is a threat to order and should therefore be seen as dysfunctional for society.

Theoretical Framework

Students of labeling theory like Becker (1963) had stated that the “pure deviant” was the person perceived or actually labelled deviant. It would appear then that theorists in the labelling school seemed to see the structural functionalists as being insensitive to the fact that there may be nothing inherently wrong with those who break the rules.

Morrish (1978) on his part, suggested that deviant behaviour was not necessarily delinquent or criminal behaviour, although it may of course, be the first step to some anti-social behaviour which may come within the sanction of the law and therefore irrevocably delinquent. According to him “deviancy” was relative as well as contextual. He suggested that it was better to speak of deviant forms than to stigmatize individuals as deviant. Similarly, Tattum (1982), and Brown (2004) subscribed to the belief that norm was genetically or instinctively violent and aggressive. These writers haven maintained that human beings are killers by nature, stating that it was a built-in characteristic which man had inherited from his animal ancestors.

However, problems have been identified in the adoption of this position. For example some people have argued that it was too simplistic to categorize the wise variety of animal behaviour under the single label of “attack behaviour”, for the conditions that may evoke the behaviour could be territorial defence, whether the animal was pray or predator, adding that even chemical trace elements may be the source of arousal. Furthermore, they have argued that, the animals that are closest to human beings are vegetarians, and that species that belonged to the family of apes rarely resorted to violence against their own species and even less commonly towards other animals.

From the culturalist perspective, there are ample evidence to show that the incidence of violence/deviance varied considerably between societies and between sub-groups within the same society. According to Brown (2004); Societies in which gentleness and non-violence are the rule provide two object lessons for any observer of violence and its relation to human behaviour. The first is that violence cannot be innate or instinctual because it is not universal; peoples everywhere are not uniformly nor necessarily violent. And the second is that the rate, incidence, and occurrence of violence the world over varies enormously; violent behaviour

is a variable, not a constant. It is present in various societies in degrees. These basic and hard facts force us to look at violence as culturally learned and maintained and not inborn.

Methodology

Population and Sample

The target population of this study was Nigerian Secondary School students. The study sample consisted of secondary school students in three Local Government Areas of Oyo State. A purposive sampling approach was used in selecting the schools. The four schools used in the study are located in urban areas. Three of them are male schools while the fourth one is a female school.

The Sample/Participants

The participants that provided the data for this study were sixty-five (65). Table 1, below shows details of their selection based on sex and class in school. The table shows that out of sixty-five (65) subjects, fifty-nine (59) were boys while six (6) were girls. Twenty-four (24) of the subjects were in SSS I. Out of this number; twenty-one (21) were boys while three (3) were girls. In SSS II out of the eighteen (18) of them, fifteen (15) were boys while three (3) were girls. Twenty-three (23) of the subjects came from SSS III and all of them were boys. These subjects, were randomly selected from SSS I – III, from four secondary schools in three different Local Government Areas of Oyo State.

Table I: Selection of subjects based on sex and classes

| Classes | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| SS I | 21 | 3 | 24 |
| SS II | 15 | 3 | 18 |
| SS III | 23 | 0 | 23 |
| Total | 59 | 6 | 65 |

Table II below shows the frequency distribution of the subjects based on age and classes. Twenty-two of the subjects fell into the category of younger children? (10 – 14). Out of this number, eighteen were in SSS I, while four were in SSS II. The remaining forty-three which made up the category of older children (15 – 19), had six in SSS I, fifteen in SSS II and twenty-two in SSS III. On the whole, twenty-four of the total subjects used came from SSS I, nineteen from SSS III and twenty-two from SSS III. The mean age of the subjects was 14.48 with a standard deviation of 1.73. The age range was between 10 – 19 years.

Table II: Frequency of subjects based on age and classes

| Age Category | Class | | | Total |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | SSS I | SSS II | SSS III | |
| Young children (10 – 14 yrs.) | 18 | 4 | 0 | 22 |
| Older children (15 – 19 yrs.) | 6 | 15 | 22 | 43 |
| Total | 24 | 19 | 22 | 65 |

Instruments

The measure of deviance was derived from the frequency of occurrence of deviant behaviour as reported in each of the schools punishment or logbook, while information concerning students' background was obtained using their responses to questions in the bio-data questionnaire. A self-constructed bio/data questionnaire, a modified Obanya's (1976) socio-economic status rating scale, and a modified Nwana (1975) deviant behaviour rating scale was used for data collection of data.

Data Analysis

The statistical test used was the chi-square to test the rejection or otherwise of the hypotheses. For each of the hypotheses, the level of significance used was 0.05.

Results**Hypothesis I**

In the null form of the hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference between the level/rate of deviant behaviour among children of high, medium and low socio-economic status.

Table III: Chi- Square analysis of the relationship between or SES and deviants behaviours among students

| SES | Observed | Expected | X ² Cal | X ² Crit |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Low | 31 | 21.70 | 11.92 | 5.99* |
| Middle | 9 | 21.70 | | |
| High | 25 | 21.70 | | |
| Total | 65 | 65 | | |

* Significant at 0.05; Df = 2; X² Crit = 5.99

This implies that the calculated value (11.92) is greater than the table value (5.99) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 significant level. Therefore, there is a significant difference between level/rate of deviant behaviour among children of high, middle and low socio-economic status.

Hypothesis II

In the null form of the hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the level/rate of deviant behaviour among younger and older children in the secondary school system.

Table IV: Statistical analysis using (χ^2) distribution for students' age

| Age Category | Observed | Expected | χ^2 Cal | χ^2 Crit |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| Younger | 22 | 32.50 | 6.79* | 3.84 |
| Older | 43 | 32.50 | | |
| Total | 65 | 65 | | |

* Significant at 0.05; χ^2 Cal value = 6.79; χ^2 Crit value = 3.84

This implies that the calculated value (6.7846) is greater than the table value (3.84) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the level/rate of deviant behaviour among younger and older children in the secondary school system.

Summary of the Findings

From the analysis of the above data, the findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. That socio-economic status plays a major role as far as deviant behaviour in Nigeria schools is concerned. From the findings, there is a significant difference between the level/rate of deviant behaviour in schools by children from the high, middle and low socio-economic status.
2. That age is important or significant as far as deviant behaviour in Nigeria secondary school system is concerned. From the findings, there is a significant difference between the level/rate of deviant behaviour and older children. The older children it was found tended to be more deviant.

Discussions

The findings of hypothesis one shows that the socio-economic status of the individual significantly influenced their deviant behaviour. That the low socio-economic status group, from the findings, produced about half of the deviant children is interesting in the Nigerian setting. This is because these children come from the very poor homes, where the parents are usually illiterates. These parents who probably because of poverty have little or nothing to offer the children, let these children loose very early in life. And in present day Nigeria,

when children are exposed to all the effects of urbanization and bad models, they therefore develop amidst a very complex and not very well cultured society thus coming in contact with different kinds of moral conducts. They can therefore end up imbibing bad morals. This lack of care or proper upbringing on the part of parents to a large extent has serious adverse consequences on the behaviour of these children when they go to school, if not even carried on to later life. This no doubt must have accounted for the large number of deviant children as shown by the findings. This only goes to confirm Mead and Benedict's suggestion cited in Kosemani, (1997). That there is an agreement between child rearing practice and later pattern of behaviour among children. Hence the large number of deviants that come from this social class could be primarily as a result of poverty and improper upbringing on the part of the parents.

According to the findings, the high socio economic status group, produced the next largest number of deviant children after the low socio-economic group, this can be explained again to improper upbringing on the part of the parents. They do not provide the proper good model and adequate supervision the children need. Unlike parents from the low socioeconomic group who are poor, the parents in this class are usually very wealthy or educated and very "well placed" in the society. Both parents usually go out to work and most often leave home early in the morning and return late in the day, at times when the children are already in bed. They thus, have little or no time to spend with the children, who they no doubt lavish their money on, and leave in the hands of domestic helpers such as house maids, drivers and servants.

In addition these children become deviants as a result of all sorts of information they get from watching films of crime and violence, pornography, technique at highway robbery and burglary and even smoking. If parents were around, they would have monitor if not prevented them from watching such bad films. Consequently most of these children are left entirely without any moral guidance, like their counterparts in the low socio-economic status. They are left at the mercy of chance circumstances in life to guide their development, and many a time, they end up as deviants. Deviant behaviour could therefore be said to be as a result of rejection by family as well as interaction with unideal models.

On the other hand the middle socio-economic status had the least number of deviants from the findings. This could be explained in the light of this class being the ones whose children have minimal exposure to bad influences and have some little amount of model given them. This is the group in which the parents are still struggling to "make it" in the society. It is in this group one finds parents leave home early in the morning to drop the children at school and at the end of the school day, leave office, to pick them. It is this group that the parents check the children's books at home to make sure they do their assignments, read their report cards, and attend parents/teachers meetings. They go out of their way to meet their children's teachers to find out how they are behaving in school. They discuss with their children and get to know them well. The above findings therefore support the general proposition that there is a relationship between the home and delinquency or deviant behaviour.

The findings in hypothesis two shows that the older children tended to be more deviant and the ages of the children one finds fell between 15 and 19 years. No doubt this is the period of adolescence, and the fact that this group was found to be more deviant only goes to support Ezewu's (1983) view that the physiological development of the secondary school child contributes to deviant behaviour in the school system. Hence, age coupled with the adolescence spirit had an over-riding influence in their committing such deviant acts as bullying, stealing, disobedience, assault and drug offences as contained in Nwana (1975) deviant behaviour rating scale. In flouting school rules and regulations one finds that the younger children, still have some elements of fear in them. They fear being caught at least by senior prefects and students. The older children on the other hand, do not in most cases; have such fears, because they feel they can beat up the prefects who in some cases may be younger. And the prefects are usually too scared to report these students who consequently flout the schools rules and regulations with impunity, to the authority, for fear of being bullied. Thus, only the school authority can check the excesses of these older children in most cases.

Conclusion

From the findings therefore, one can say that the socio-economic status in particular as well as the age of the student to a large extent contribute to deviant behaviour in Nigeria secondary schools.

Recommendation

This study is of great importance to all concerned with the up bringing of the young ones to become responsible members of the society. As the child's early education and character formation takes place in the home, parents should attach importance to child rearing and therefore endeavour to provide good model and supervision.

Teachers, who are entrusted with the up bringing of their students, should endeavour to make themselves good models for the children to copy. In addition, schools should provide guidance and counselling services to help reduce the rate of deviance.

The government through the social welfare office should institute enlightenment programmes for parents of the low socio-economic status in particular, to give guidance to the parents for proper childcare. As the school is a reflection of the larger society, society should therefore endeavour to help the school to check some social conducts that lead to deviant behaviour.

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